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Questions relating to information

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Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

In pursuance of General Assembly resolution 56/64 B of 24 December 2001, the present report covers the recent activities of the Department of Public Information, and the implementation of the recommendations contained in the resolution.

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I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 56/64 B of 24 December 2001, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report to the Committee on Information at its twenty-fourth session and to the General Assembly at its fifty-seventh session on the activities of the Department of Public Information and on the implementation of the recommendations contained in the resolution. The present report is prepared in response to resolution 56/64 B and updates the information already provided.[1]

2. Six reports were prepared for consideration by the Committee on Information at its twenty-fourth session, held from 22 April to 2 May 2002.[2] The Interim Head of the Department of Public Information[3] presented additional substantive information in his opening statement to the Committee. The deliberations of the Committee are reflected in its report to the General Assembly.[4]

II. Overview

3. Guided by the strong commitment of the Secretary-General to enhanced communications as a key element in the reform and revitalization of the United Nations, the Department has been engaged, since 1997, in a process of reorientation to enable it to convey the story of the United Nations with more vigour and purpose and to greater effect. At the same time, notwithstanding the progress that has been made in strengthening the communications function within the Organization, the General Assembly, in its resolution 56/253 of 24 December 2001, requested the Secretary-General to conduct a comprehensive review of the management and operations of the Department of Public Information and to report thereon at its fifty-seventh session. The review would address, among other things: the Department's overall effectiveness and efficiency; the focusing of its work to better reflect the substantive priorities and relevant mandates of the Organization; the need for greater coordination with the Secretariat on public information activities; and the work and funding of the United Nations information centres.

4. At its twenty-fourth session, the Committee on Information engaged in an in-depth review of the report of the Secretary-General on the reorientation of United Nations activities in the field of public information and communications (A/AC.198/2002/2). The report contained a preliminary outline of the principal issues and findings emerging from the comprehensive review and the strategic direction the Department of Public Information was considering as a result. The final results of the comprehensive review will be presented by the Secretary-General at a later date, in the context of the overall process of review and evaluation now under way within the Organization.

5. During the course of this review, and pending any final decisions, the Department of Public Information has been mindful of its mandate to create an informed understanding of the Organization's work and purposes, as called for in General Assembly resolution 13 (I) of 13 February 1946. Following the priorities laid down by the General Assembly, and using the Millennium Declaration as its guide, the Department is focusing on the following major issues: the eradication of poverty, conflict prevention, sustainable development, human rights, the HIV/AIDS epidemic, the battle against international terrorism, and the needs of the African continent. In this connection, the Department is working with the agencies and programmes of the United Nations system to spread awareness and to advance the Millennium development goals through a joint communications strategy.

6. During the past year, using every means at its disposal, the Department has worked to project the voice of the Secretary-General on key international issues and to convey the message that the United Nations is an indispensable Organization to the peoples of the world. Following the terrorist attacks of 11 September, the Department of Public Information moved quickly to inform an anxious world of the Organization's response and, among other things, created a special web page in all official languages on United Nations actions to address the issue of terrorism.

7. The Department, while maintaining its traditional means of disseminating information, has further extended its use of new information technologies to deliver news and information on the United Nations to audiences in all areas of the world. Daily news broadcasts sent to more than 150 radio stations continue to bring the work of the United Nations system closer to millions of people around the world. The United Nations News Service has established itself on the Internet as a gateway to up-to-date news and information on the United Nations for a growing

number of media organizations. The Department's Internet site is now backed by a parallel e-mail service that brings news directly to the desks of redisseminators in the media, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), academia and civil society. In the first two months of operation, this customized service secured over 2,000 subscribers in all regions of the world, providing another means of multiplying outreach for the United Nations message.

8. This initiative is an integral part of the Department's efforts to improve the access of media outlets in the developing countries to important news stories and information sources from the United Nations, thereby responding to the call by the General Assembly to maintain and improve its activities in areas in which developing countries have special needs. This is also being done through the outreach activities of the United Nations information centres, through training programmes at Headquarters for media practitioners from developing countries and through information strategies formulated by the Department in support of the current cycle of conferences and special sessions of the General Assembly on economic and social issues. Furthermore, the Department's continued active use of traditional means of dissemination, including radio and print, takes into consideration the needs of its audiences on both sides of the digital divide.

9. The Department has continued throughout the past year to promote global awareness and better public understanding of the objectives and activities of the United Nations by producing and disseminating a broad range of information materials in all media in both the working languages of the Secretariat and, to the extent possible, the other official languages of the Organization. Mindful of the importance placed on the multilingual character of its work, the Department has a number of information products and services available in the six official languages, such as the daily live radio programmes, the *United Nations Chronicle*, and the United Nations News Centre. The Dag Hammarskjöld Library continues to maintain the archival collection of United Nations documents and publications in all languages and formats of issuance. Visitors to Headquarters are still able to take guided tours in all official languages, as well as 14 others. The Department of Public Information will continue to provide its products and services in as many official languages and non-official languages as feasible, within its allocated resources.

10. To enhance the ability of the United Nations system to speak with one voice, the Department has taken a leading role in developing the United Nations Communications Group into a more flexible, pragmatic and task-oriented mechanism for inter-agency coordination on public information and communications. This group, for which the Department of Public Information provides the secretariat, officially replaced the former Joint United Nations Information Committee in January 2002. In addition to its annual meeting, hosted this year by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations at its headquarters in Rome, from 27 to 28 June, the Communications Group holds weekly meetings under the chairmanship of the head of the Department, with the participation of New York-based representatives of all organizations of the United Nations system, as well as special task forces on priority issues, such as the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

III. United Nations web site

11. The United Nations web site continues to grow in popularity worldwide. It provides the latest daily information on the activities of the Organization and receives, on average, close to five million visits daily from people in more than 156 countries. These visitors are viewing over 500,000 pages of material daily. In 2001, the web site was accessed over 1.1 billion times, an increase of 488 million over the previous year.

12. The Department has continued its work to strengthen the coordination and management of the site and to offer guidance to many other content-providing areas, both inside and outside the Secretariat, in support of their Internet activities. The new interdepartmental Working Group on Internet Matters, chaired by the Department, has also helped to increase interdepartmental cooperation in this area. The Department's Information Technology Section, renamed the United Nations Web site Section, has been moved to the Department's News and Media Division, as of 1 June 2002, in order to take advantage of increased synergies with the radio, television and print media.

13. Since early 2002, many parliamentary documents in the six official languages have been linked directly

to the new Official Document System (ODS), thereby eliminating the need for copying them from ODS and posting them again on the United Nations web site. This has increased the amount of material now available on the non-English language sites, the usage of which is increasing considerably.

14. The Department continues to build on the successful development of the in-house capability for live webcasting. Over 60 hours of live simultaneous webcasts of all plenary sessions and most press conferences, in both English and the original language of the speaker, were provided for the International Conference on Financing for Development, held in Monterrey, Mexico, from 18 to 22 March. These videos were viewed during the conference period by more than 21,000 users, with over 1,000 viewers tuning in simultaneously.

15. Over the past year, the Department has organized two training seminars for assisting permanent missions in New York to design and maintain their own web sites. As a result, 16 Spanish-speaking and 9 francophone permanent missions have established their web sites, all linked to the United Nations site. The francophone seminar was conducted by the Department, in cooperation with the International Organization of La Francophonie.

16. Utilizing "The UN Works" concept, the Department is currently developing a web site to promote awareness and understanding of the Millennium development goals. The United Nations Cyberschoolbus web site, which is targeted to young people and teachers, has continued to update and improve its popular profiles of Member States and to develop new educational materials. Its English content is translated into other United Nations official languages, with an emphasis on Arabic, Chinese, and Russian.

IV. General public information activities

A. Services to the media

17. The media is the single most important vehicle through which global opinion about the United Nations is formed. The Office of the Spokesman for the Secretary-General conducts the daily noon briefing and keeps the press, delegations and the public informed, not only of the work of the Secretary-General, but also of developments throughout the United Nations system. The Organization's official position on matters in the news is conveyed by the Spokesman's Office through the briefings, official statements, interviews and background briefings. The Spokesman's Office provides transcripts of all the Secretary-General's remarks to the press via the United Nations web site, issues his official statements and updates his daily appointments and travel records. The highlights of the daily briefing are also posted on the web site in an easy-to-read bullet point format. The information from the noon briefing provides the basis for the items posted on the United Nations News Service web site, as well as for other news outlets of the Department of Public Information.

18. The live radio project, for which the General Assembly has approved funding for the 2002-2003 biennium, has continued to reach large audiences worldwide with its daily 15-minute current affairs news magazine. Programmes consisting of news, interviews, backgrounders, updates on peacekeeping missions and feature stories are produced five days a week, including holidays, in the six official languages of the Organization. Major international broadcasters airing the programmes include China National Radio, the Voice of Russia, Africa Numero Un, Radio Côte d'Ivoire, the Voice of Nigeria, Radio Cairo, Channel Africa, Radio Nacional de Venezuela and Radio Habana Cuba. Two partner networks which have helped to establish United Nations radio and its programmes on the international broadcasting map are Radio for Peace International in Costa Rica and the World Radio Network in the United Kingdom. United Nations radio programmes are also posted on the United Nations web site and are thus available for any station to download for use.

19. For the biennium 2002-2003, additional resources, totalling $2,372,000 (covering posts, production and equipment requirements), were appropriated for the live radio project. Whenever possible, other resources within the Department are being used to augment the project's production capacity. However, in view of the budgetary situation of the Department, there is no scope within its current budget for the absorption of the cost of the live radio project. At the request of Member States, the Department explored the possibility of raising extrabudgetary resources. In this connection, it sent

letters to all Permanent Missions requesting financial contributions for the project and assistance in securing air time to carry the radio programmes on their national stations. While no positive response was received regarding financial contributions, several Member States provided access for the Department to carry the live radio broadcasts on their national radio networks (a list of radio stations that have confirmed the broadcast of the Department's radio programmes is included in the internal departmental compilation referred to in footnote number 1).

20. In light of the above, and in order to ensure the continuation of the project beyond the current biennium, it will be necessary to secure regular budget funding, at a minimum at the current level, for the next biennium. Accordingly, the Department will include funding proposals in the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2004-2005 for the continuation of the live radio project.

21. Based on listener figures, United Nations radio programmes are heard by millions of people every day in all regions of the world. More detailed listenership surveys are being planned for the future. A combination of shortwave transmission, satellite distribution, digital and analog telephone lines, as well as the Internet, are currently being used, and sustained efforts are being made to exploit new technologies for disseminating the Department's radio programmes, especially to developing countries. The Department also continues to produce programmes in nine non-official languages, including Kiswahili and Portuguese, and to send a reduced number of taped programmes to stations that do not yet have the capacity to receive live broadcasts.

22. United Nations television has continued to produce and distribute television coverage of meetings, press conferences and special events at Headquarters. The coverage is distributed daily by satellite to broadcasters throughout the world through the major television news redisseminators. This television coverage is also used in all live webcasts from Headquarters. The Department has continued to produce the weekly television news programme "UN in Action", which is distributed in five languages to broadcasters in more than 100 countries. It can now also be accessed by international audiences through streaming video on the United Nations web site. The programme "World Chronicle" was also produced and shown on cable television stations in some 15 countries, including South Africa, which redisseminated it to the rest of the African continent. Thirteen five-to-seven minute television magazine stories funded by the United Nations Foundation, and the annual 15-minute round-up of world affairs, "Year in Review", produced in the six official languages, reached wide audiences through satellite television and the Internet. Key partnerships have also enabled the Department to increase video production. With the support of both the United Nations Foundation and major redisseminators such as CNN, the Department has provided broadcasters with field footage as well as coverage of important United Nations events.

23. The United Nations News Centre portal, featuring enhanced search and navigation tools and new database-driven functions, has been recently redesigned, in close cooperation with the Information Technology Services Division. The site has been further upgraded with the launch of its French-language version, and work is under way to develop similar News Centre sites in the other official languages.

24. To reach out directly to media throughout the world, the Department, in close collaboration with the network of United Nations information centres, continues to place opinion pieces by the Secretary-General and other senior officials on a wide range of issues before the Organization in prominent media worldwide. As part of this outreach, the Department and the United Nations Staff College co-sponsored the third in a series of communication workshops for senior United Nations officials. The workshop, entitled "Communication as a reform tool for the United Nations", was held in New York from 11 to 15 April 2002. Continuing its series of targeted briefings for key journalists, in July 2002, the Department, with the financial backing of the Better World Fund, held the fifth programme in the series, this time for United States editorial writers.

25. The Department provided logistical support for the indigenous journalists sponsored to attend the first session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in May 2002 as members of the indigenous media project run by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. The Department's training programme for broadcasters and journalists from developing countries is being held this year from 9 September to 18 October. The programme provides junior and mid-level media professionals working at

Headquarters for a six-week stint with in-depth knowledge of the work of the United Nations and its related organizations. This year, the Department has invited participants from Afghanistan, Algeria, Brunei Darussalam, Cape Verde, the Central African Republic, Estonia, Guatemala, India, Qatar, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Slovakia and Tonga, as well as journalists sponsored by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation of Germany. To date, over 300 journalists from more than 140 countries have participated in the programme. The Department has also scheduled a media training programme, to be held from 1 October through 15 November 2002 at Headquarters, for eight Palestinian journalists.

B. Outreach to non-governmental organizations

26. The Department of Public Information has continued to actively implement the Millennium Declaration goal of providing greater opportunities to civil society organizations to contribute to the work of the Organization. In this connection, the Department's fifty-fifth annual conference for NGOs, which is to be held from 9 to 11 September 2002 on the theme "Rebuilding societies emerging from conflict: a shared responsibility", is expected to attract some 1,800 representatives from 600 organizations in 90 countries.

27. Approximately 150 new representatives of NGOs attended the annual orientation programme held by the Department on 30 and 31 May 2002. There is now a review and evaluation process in place to ensure that all associated NGOs continue to fulfil the criteria for association. As a result, the number of associated NGOs has decreased from about 1,600 to 1,400, and the Department is taking a more proactive role in inviting qualified organizations to apply for association.

C. Services to the public

28. This past year has been a particularly challenging one for the Department's Public Services Section at Headquarters. While visitor attendance for guided tours had been rising throughout most of 2001, the events of 11 September took a decided toll. With the month-long closure of Headquarters to the public, and with continuing security restrictions, the figures for the guided tours and group programmes dropped considerably, and recovery has been slow. The Department of Public Information has continued to make improvements where possible, including by the introduction of plasma monitors outside the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council Chambers. The Department is also actively involved in discussions regarding the Visitors' Experience proposal (A/55/835) and its relationship to the Capital Master Plan.

29. With the restricted access to Headquarters, electronic outreach took on added importance over the past year. In December 2001, for example, instead of bringing 400 students to Headquarters for the Student Conference on Human Rights, the United Nations was brought to them through a videoconference linking students and speakers in Cairo, Geneva and Mexico City, as well as two locations in Canada and five locations throughout the United States of America.

30. In October 2001, two Italian companies donated new uniforms and footwear for the tour guides, as part of the expanded partnership between the Department and the private sector. This fall, as the United Nations celebrates the fiftieth anniversary of the guided tour operation, an exhibit chronicling its history is being produced with the sponsorship of the International Photographic Council, an NGO associated with the Department.

V. Thematic information programmes

31. In cooperation with the relevant substantive departments, the Department of Public Information has sought to enhance its expertise and establish the capacity necessary to create and implement communications strategies promoting United Nations action in the priority areas set out in the Millennium Declaration. During the current reporting period, the Department has worked on a number of conferences and special sessions, the promotion of which is a major part of its core responsibility.

32. The Department conducted a strong information campaign that helped to build critical support for the International Conference on Financing for Development and also coordinated the United Nations system's public information efforts for it, working, in particular, with the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organization. A

meeting with leaders of NGOs in January 2002 contributed to a positive view of the Conference. The Department issued a press kit for the Conference in English and French. The Conference received wide, positive daily media coverage in both developed and developing countries. An independent assessment found that pre-selected messages promoted by the Department of Public Information appeared consistently in major media coverage, promoting not only the Conference, but also related United Nations issues. Billboards and banners with compelling images of people and the headline, "Invest in People. It Pays Off", were designed by "The UN Works".

33. In cooperation with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the Spanish organizing committee, the Department developed a multimedia information strategy to publicize the Second World Assembly on Ageing, which was held in Madrid, from 8 to 12 April 2002. Posters, press kits, brochures, an exhibition and a special web page helped build interest in the conference. Public service announcements for television, radio and print media featured the renowned mime Marcel Marceau, one of the Goodwill Ambassadors for the World Assembly. In addition, outdoor billboards, featuring photos of individuals whose achievements challenge the common stereotypes of older people, were posted in over 125 bus shelters in Madrid. Their stories appeared in a special "The UN Works" web site feature on the Assembly. These promotional efforts increased coverage by the international media of the Assembly and the global issue of ageing.

34. In the area of children's rights, the Department worked with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to implement a communication strategy developed for the special session of the General Assembly on children, which was held in New York from 8 to 10 May 2002. The Department provided the media with coverage of proceedings and other services, as well as maintaining an Internet-based information and coverage web page in all six official languages. "The UN Works" offered a lively web site feature focusing on the dreams and aspirations of several children attending the special session.

35. A proactive and coordinated communications campaign has been under way since last year to promote the World Summit on Sustainable Development, to be held from 26 August to 4 September, based on a communications strategy developed by the Department in cooperation with the Summit secretariat. The campaign emphasizes media outreach utilizing the key messages developed in the strategy. Information activities for the Summit and for the sessions of the Preparatory Committee have included brochures, booklets, posters, a press kit, backgrounders and press releases. In particular, outreach for the fourth session of the Preparatory Committee, held in Bali, Indonesia, from 27 May to 7 June, resulted in the attendance by over 230 journalists and media coverage, especially in Asia and Europe.

36. The Department of Public Information prepared an information campaign to promote the designated theme for the July 2002 high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council, the contribution of human resources development in general, including in the areas of health and education, to the process of development. The Department worked with the Special Adviser on the Millennium development goals and with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs to make available new statistics regarding trends in health and education and progress towards the goals in these areas. It also worked with: the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS to publicize its report on the extent of the global HIV/AIDS epidemic; the Department of Economic and Social Affairs on the launch of its *World Economic and Social Survey*; and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) on its least developed countries report.

37. The Department promoted the first meeting of the new Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues by organizing media interviews with participants and producing a special exhibit for it. The Department has continued to promote the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations (2001) and to publicize the findings of the Group of Eminent Persons appointed by the Secretary-General for the Year. On 6 December 2001, the Department organized a special forum in observance of Human Rights Day, the focus of which was "News versus Propaganda: the Gatekeeper's Dilemma", in which a number of distinguished international media professionals participated.

38. In cooperation with the Office of Legal Affairs, the Department has publicized issues related to international law. In April 2002 the Department promoted the sixtieth ratification of the Rome Treaty establishing the International Criminal Court and its

entry into force. The instruments of ratification were deposited in a solemn ceremony followed by a press conference, organized by the Department.

39. In the area of peace and security, the Department has continued to publicize the work of United Nations peacekeeping, peacemaking and peace-building missions, as well as certain disarmament activities. The Department regularly produces the background note on United Nations peacekeeping operations and the background note on United Nations peacemaking and peace-building missions, providing an overview of all current peace operations. In December, the Department published *Year in Review: United Nations Peace Operations in 2001 — Voices from the field.* The Department also updated its timeline brochure: "United Nations peacekeeping 1948-2001" with versions in all six official languages. The Department has continued to maintain and update web pages on United Nations peace operations, including by posting materials originated by the missions, and to provide advice on sites maintained by the missions.

40. At the initiative of the Department, a meeting of chiefs of public information of United Nations peacekeeping, political and other field missions took place at Headquarters in December 2001. The meeting, jointly sponsored by the Department of Public Information, the Department of Political Affairs, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, brought together 34 field personnel and their Headquarters colleagues from the four Departments. The aim of the meeting was to provide a strategic overview of public information in peace operations and to encourage discussion of issues, problems and solutions related to public information work in the field.

41. The Department of Public Information, in implementation of relevant provisions of General Assembly resolutions, and working closely with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Political Affairs, has continued to provide planning and operational support to information components of peacekeeping operations and other field missions, insofar as resources allow. In this connection, in June 2002, the General Assembly approved the request for two additional posts for the Department from the peacekeeping support account for the period 1 July 2002 to 30 June 2003 for the purpose of backstopping peacekeeping operations.

42. With East Timor's accession to independence on 20 May 2002, the Department, working with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET), undertook activities to highlight this event as a United Nations success story. An Op-Ed article by the Secretary-General, heralding the birth of a new nation, was placed in major newspapers around the world. A new web site detailing the work of the United Nations follow-on mission in East Timor, the United Nations Mission of Support in East Timor (UNMISET), was also developed.

43. The Department worked with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) in dealing with the decision of the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission on delimitation. These collaborative efforts included placing of an Op-Ed article by the Secretaries-General of the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity in major newspapers as well as posting the Commission decision on the United Nations web site. The Department also contributed to the development of the web site for the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC), which was launched in May 2002.

44. The Department participated in the Integrated Mission Task Force for Afghanistan and assisted in drawing up an integrated mission plan. It also provided inputs to the media needs assessment in Afghanistan, and continues to backstop the public information section of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA).

45. The Department assisted the Department for Disarmament Affairs and the Provisional Technical Secretariat of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization with the public information campaign for the Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, which was held from 11 to 13 November 2001 at Headquarters.

46. In accordance with the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly, the Department of Public Information continued to sensitize public opinion on the question of Palestine through its special information programme. An international media seminar, the eleventh in a series launched in 1991, was organized on 17 and 18 July 2002 in Copenhagen.

Media representatives and experts discussed the question of peace in the Middle East and ways and means to break the deadlock. The Department is in the process of reissuing two booklets, "The United Nations and the Question of Palestine" and "For the Rights of the Palestinian People", and one brochure, "The United Nations and the Question of Palestine", in the six official languages of the United Nations.

47. The Department maintains a web page on decolonization in English, French and Spanish on the United Nations web site. A new brochure highlighting the launch of the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism (2001-2010) was issued and disseminated worldwide, and the book, entitled *Decolonization: the Task Ahead*, is being reissued in the fall.

48. The Department planned and coordinated a number of special events over the past year, often with partners in the United Nations system, as well as in civil society. In December 2001, an observance of World AIDS Day on the theme, "I Care. Do You?", was co-sponsored by the Department of Public Information and UNAIDS, as well as by a number of United Nations agencies and programmes. The Department also organized the annual observance of International Women's Day on 8 March 2002, with the theme "Afghan Women Today: Realities and Possibilities"; and an event in observance of World Press Freedom Day on 2 May 2002, in cooperation with the World Press Freedom Committee, at which journalists discussed the theme, "Covering the war on global terror".

VI. United Nations information centres

49. The United Nations information centres serve as the local focal point for strategic advocacy on behalf of the United Nations system. In the past year, the 77 United Nations information centres, services and offices around the world have intensified their efforts to communicate the global messages of the United Nations and to demonstrate the relevance of the Organization's work to people everywhere. They have focused their work, in particular, on issues of local and regional concern and delivered their messages in the local languages, whenever appropriate. The centres continue to work with a variety of partners, including Governments, local authorities, media, educational institutions, NGOs and other civil society organizations, as well as partners from the United Nations system represented at the country level, in order to maximize their outreach and the impact of their activities.

50. A number of information centres have translated and produced local language versions of the Department's press kits prepared, in advance, for major United Nations conferences and other events. In preparation for the International Conference on Financing for Development, the United Nations information centre in Mexico City developed a major promotional effort within the framework of "The UN Works" campaign, raising over half a million dollars through co-sponsorship with local partners. The Department's English/French press kit for the International Conference was translated by United Nations information centres into Arabic, Russian and Spanish, as well as in a number of local languages, including Danish, Farsi, Finnish, German, Italian, Japanese, Norwegian, Portuguese and Swedish, for posting on their web sites, often on the special pages developed to promote the objectives of the Conference. Similar efforts were undertaken in preparation for the Second World Assembly on the Ageing, the special session on children and the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

51. The Department has continued to encourage and support the efforts by the United Nations information centres, services and offices to establish their own web sites to take advantage of the vast potential of the Internet to increase outreach. These sites have become an indispensable source of information for journalists, students, academics and the public at large. The site of the United Nations information centre at Lisbon was recently recognized by a Portuguese publication as the site of the month. Since the last report of the Secretary-General on questions relating to information, United Nations information centres in Dakar, Dar es Salaam, Nairobi, Sydney and Yaoundé, as well as the United Nations Office in Azerbaijan, have developed their own web sites. At present, 46 field offices maintain their own web sites in 23 local languages, in addition to the sites in official languages.

VII. Library and cartographic services

52. Over the past year, the Dag Hammarskjöld Library has made great progress in its efforts to improve its web site in the six official languages, to

increase its access to electronic information and to provide training programmes for permanent mission personnel, Secretariat staff and depository libraries (107 sessions for 577 trainees).

53. In the past year, special thematic resource pages have been introduced to the web site, on subjects such as terrorism and the Nobel Peace Prize. Efforts were made to improve the multilingual nature of the site, within existing resources. One major new feature is the UNBIS thesaurus file, in the six official languages, which was posted to the web as a beta test site (http://www.un.org/depts/dhl/thes/thes_intro.htm) in November 2001. Thesaurus data was also transmitted to the Official Document System (ODS), permitting the searching and display of subject descriptors on that system in all six official languages.

54. At the end of May 2002, there were 408 United Nations depository libraries worldwide receiving United Nations documents and publications. Increasingly, documents are submitted electronically. As of 31 May 2002, 98 depository libraries have converted their hard-copy entitlements of documents into access to ODS. As part of its ongoing efforts to make United Nations documentation more accessible, as well as to contribute to bridging the digital divide, the Library conducted a regional training course for depository libraries last year in Rabat, from 24 to 26 September, which was attended by 11 librarians from francophone Africa, as well as four staff members from United Nations information centres.

55. In the past year, the Library continued to expand the resources accessible to United Nations staff worldwide and, in many cases, to permanent missions as well, through its efforts in consortium purchasing with other United Nations system agencies. Particular efforts were made to provide increased access to multilingual resources through subscriptions to such services as Factiva and Encyclopedia Universalis. While the Library currently subscribes to 63 electronic databases, products and services, budget reductions have resulted in cutbacks during the current biennium. As requested by Member States, the Library has increased its efforts to select materials in the various official languages, with an emphasis on French and Arabic, although here again, budget cuts have impacted on the acquisition of print materials.

56. The Department continues to expand its cartographic and geographic products and services, including cartographic presentations in support of the briefings by the Secretariat at Security Council consultation meetings. Revised peacekeeping and general maps continue to be prepared and new ones have been developed and posted on the cartographic web site in digital form for free access by Member States and the Secretariat. The Chief of the Cartographic Section continues to chair the inter-agency United Nations Geographic Information Working Group, one of the objectives of which is to coordinate the development and maintenance of a common United Nations geographic database. In accordance with the peace agreement between the Governments of Eritrea and Ethiopia, signed on 12 December 2000, the Chief of the Cartographic Section, as Secretary of the Boundary Commission and his staff helped to facilitate the successful decision on the boundary delimitation of 13 April 2002.

VIII. Publishing activities

57. A major activity of the *Africa Recovery* information programme has been media outreach and promotion in connection with the United Nations review of the decade of activities for the New Agenda for Development in Africa in the 1990s, scheduled to take place in September. The programme strengthened its outreach capacity by adding a short news feature to its web site, www.africarecovery.org, making it possible to post analytical articles. The programme's news feature service has been expanded by offering major newspapers in Africa the opportunity to reprint, free of charge, articles prior to publication in *Africa Recovery*.

58. In recent months, the *UN Chronicle* resumed publication in Arabic, Chinese, Russian and Spanish, along with the ongoing English and French editions, thus making the magazine available, once again, in all six official languages. The magazine is now in a position to successfully advance the Department's efforts to address the multilingualism priorities established by the General Assembly. These additional editions have been made possible through innovative, decentralized co-publishing arrangements, which substantially reduce outlays for the Organization. The co-publishing partners, based in Beijing, Cairo, Mexico City and Moscow, also generate new subscribers for the magazine in those four regions. At the same time, the publication has enhanced and invigorated its online

editions in English and French (http://www.un.org/Chronicle and http://www.un.org/french/pubs/chronique), ensuring the posting of topical articles even in advance of the print edition, an example being the stories posted in the weeks after the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001.

59. In addition to its ongoing coverage of the work of the General Assembly and the Security Council, the *UN Chronicle* has produced special features, including articles on: the future of human settlements; the health challenges for Africa; the progress made in protecting the rights of the child; the problem of food security; the state of human rights and the persistence of discrimination; the global impact of international terrorism and the United Nations response to it; Afghanistan's road to recovery; strengthening development goals through financing for development; and the need for sustainable development.

60. Volume 53 of the *Yearbook of the United Nations*, covering all the major activities of the Organization during 1999, was published in January 2002. Work is currently under way on the 2000 and 2001 volumes. A CD-ROM package containing the first 53 volumes of the *Yearbook* was made available in July 2002.

61. Issued twice-monthly in partnership with the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, the Asian Development Bank and other multilateral lending institutions, *United Nations Development Business* remains a self-sustaining extrabudgetary publication, available both in print and online (http://www.devbusiness.com), offering comprehensive information on sector projects funded by the major development banks, the United Nations system and government agencies. The procurement notices of these entities are published in English, French, Portuguese and Spanish, and the worldwide distribution of *United Nations Development Business* assists developing countries in procuring goods and services at the most competitive prices.

62. The Department's publishing activities include the provision of production and coordination services, as well as complete design services for clients throughout the Secretariat. Graphic design services include logos, posters, press kits, book covers and text formatting, brochures, booklets and other print media products.

63. Sales of United Nations publications reached new levels for the biennium 2000-2001, with total income increasing by 4.7 per cent over the previous period. At the same time, the excess of income over expenditure improved significantly, increasing by over 100 per cent to reach $2,846,428. In Geneva, gross income from sales activities increased slightly, but overall excess of income over expenditure improved significantly. The greatest increases, however, were seen in the sale of United Nations publications at Headquarters. While partly attributed to the enhanced marketing of publications, the increase can also be linked to the growing income being generated by online products such as the Treaty Collection and the new UNSTATS database. The Department's extensive promotion of publications included the production of 12 specialized catalogues and 48 brochures, reaching a targeted audience of over 650,000 potential customers. For the first time, the United Nations Publications Catalogue was distributed in CD-ROM format. Cooperation with external publishers, whether in the private or public domain, led to a number of new projects during the period.

IX. Conclusions

64. Proliferating mandates have resulted in a fragmentation of the activities of the Department of Public Information and an overall ambiguity surrounding its mission. To enhance the visibility of the Organization in a world suffering from "information overload" and to build the necessary support for its activities, the Department will articulate its mission statement to focus on drawing attention to the substantive work of the Organization, especially through appropriate intermediaries, to achieve the greatest public impact.

65. In response to the Secretary-General's call for the creation of a culture of communications within the Organization, the Department of Public Information is working more closely than ever with all Departments of the Secretariat to establish the capacity to devise and implement communications strategies to promote United Nations activities. The Department is using every means at its disposal to create a multiplier effect, through increased partnerships, in particular with the media, NGOs and educational institutions, to disseminate the United Nations message. At the same time it will continue to respond to the needs of Member States

by providing, to the extent possible, services which they find valuable.

66. **The Department will aim to prioritize its work programme and the allocation of its resources among its many mandated activities in order to better focus its message and concentrate its efforts to produce products and programmes targeted to the needs of its worldwide audiences. In this connection, it will make every effort to create an evaluation culture of increased performance management, based on programme impact reviews.**

67. **It must be reiterated that specific proposals for the reform of the Department will be included in the forthcoming report of the Secretary-General on the comprehensive review of the management and operations of the Department of Public Information. At the same time, the work of the Department will also be impacted by the results of three additional reviews, namely: on United Nations publications and information materials; on United Nations system library services; and on the information centres, conducted by the Office of Internal Oversight Services.**

68. **As a result of the process of review now under way, it is expected that the Department of Public Information will be repositioned to work more strategically as an effective vehicle to communicate the work of the United Nations to the world public.**

Notes

[1] A detailed listing of the major activities and outputs of the Department of Public Information in the past year is set out in an internal departmental compilation, which is available electronically and can be provided upon request.

[2] See A/AC.198/2002/2-7.

[3] Effective 1 June 2002, the Interim Head of the Department was appointed Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information.

[4] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-seventh Session, Supplement No. 21* (A/57/21).